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One Year Ago in Figure Four Weekly (#241) plus ordering information
by Bryan Alvarez

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One Year Ago in Figure Four Weekly
February 7, 2000

Chris Benoit, Dean Malenko, Eddy Guerrero and Perry Saturn all debuted on the January 31st WWF Raw is War show as "the Radicals", invited guests of Mick Foley. What actually happened on Raw is covered in the television report later. We will talk about the backstory here.

To make a long story short, Vince McMahon actually thought that in this day and age you could keep a secret from wrestling fans.

In the week leading up to their appearance on Raw, the WWF planted several false stories to throw people off track. There were stories of the meetings with the WWF not going well. There were stories about how the WWF had offered them disappointing contracts. There were stories about how Eddy Guerrero was probably going to Japan and Dean Malenko was thinking about maybe even retiring.

Jim Ross announced in his online report last Thursday that no deal had been signed with the four. Ross said he was going to be traveling down to Texas to interview Steve Austin that weekend, which would rule out them signing contracts during that period.

As it turned out, all of this was a work. Sources indicate that Saturn, Guerrero and Malenko all signed for an estimated \$250,000 downside guarantee with Benoit getting \$400,000. They definitely were not low-balled as the rumors claimed last week, and in fact Rock's downside is only \$400,000 as well. Of course, with merchandise and bonuses, Rock is on track to make over \$3 million this year, so these downsides are really just worst-case scenarios for everyone involved.

As far as their attempts to keep this a secret are concerned, WWF's first mistake was to announce on its website last Thursday that they were negotiating with the four. While there is a possibility that the WWF would make a statement like this just to satisfy curiosity, the fact is that it's also very unlikely WWF would mention an individual's name on their website unless that person was signed, sealed and delivered.

Anyone checking out our website Sunday night knew that all four were likely to appear on Raw Monday night. Although the plan was to keep this invasion angle somewhat of a secret, the

WWF itself ended up announcing on its website Monday afternoon that all four guys had been seen in Pittsburgh that afternoon.

While everything went well on Raw, Guerrero ended up getting off to a very bad start in his first WWF match. We learned just before going to press that Guerrero had dislocated his elbow during a tag team match at the Smackdown tapings Tuesday night. The plan for the show was to do a best-of-three series between the Radicals and DX. If Radicals won the series, they'd be rewarded with WWF contracts. The plan was for X-Pac to beat Dean Malenko, Saturn & Eddy Guerrero to beat the New Age Outlaws, and Hunter Hearst Helmsely to beat Chris Benoit. That way, the "outsiders" storyline could continue with the Radicals looking for other ways to get a contract. At the show, Malenko beat X-Pac as planned. Unfortunately, during the tag match, Eddy went for a frog splash and his elbow popped out in what was said to be a gruesome display. He immediately laid down for the unscheduled pin, making the series 2-0 in favor of DX and totally ruining all the plans and heat for the Hunter vs. Benoit match. There was no word at press time as to how the situation would be handled on the show.

Guerrero, who was several weeks away from getting medical clearance to wrestle, went to the doctor Tuesday night to get the elbow treated. He is expected out of action at least two months, and possibly quite a bit longer depending on whether the X-Rays show any serious damage. He is still expected to play a major role on TV while he recovers.

Ratings

Raw scored another huge number this week, kicking Nitro's ass in the process.

Raw scored a 6.64 rating off hourly numbers of 6.12 and 7.03. Nitro scored a 2.81 off hourly numbers of 3.31 and 2.30. Head-to-head, Raw killed Nitro 6.12 to 2.30. Nitro didn't break a 3.0 in any of its second-hour quarters.

Smackdown last week drew a record-high 5.64 rating (5.61 and 5.70). The number is strong, but some of that had to be attributed to Bill Clinton's State of the Union Address airing on almost every other network channel and giving the WWF very little competition. Thunder on Wednesday drew a 2.51 rating off hourly numbers of 2.50 and 2.53. At least Thunder didn't plummet in the second hour this week.

ECW on TNN drew a 1.02 rating, down just a little bit.

Sunday Night Heat drew a 1.93, which is actually pretty strong going up against the SuperBowl.

Halftime Heat, which broke the 6.0 mark last year, drew a 5.0 this time around hyping up some mid-card matches and an exclusive interview with Steve Austin. This number is actually tremendous, since the movie that aired on the USA Network immediately following Heat drew a 0.0 rating and a 0.0 share. I am not making these ratings up. So WCW should be happy with the shitty numbers they've been getting recently.

Internet Quote of the Week

“Why are so many fans at WCW Saturday Night masquerading as empty seats?”

Special Thanks

I would like to thank the following individuals for their help in putting Figure Four Weekly together: Gladys Gibson, Carlos and Valerie Alvarez, Dave Meltzer, Craig Proper, Brent Kremen, Mike Rodgers, Tadashi Tanaka, Natina Schulz, Koji Yamamoto, Peter Stein, Mike Loreface, Carlos Loera, John Courville, Brian Schenk, Bruce Mitchell, Mike Mooneyham, Bob Barnett, Georgiann Makropoulos, Rory Hughes, Steve Singer, Jack Johnson, Craig Foster Jr., Brian Giese, Joel Walker, David Pordy.

WWF News and Notes

- The Steve Austin interview on Heat was pretty similar to the one he gave on WWF Radio a few weeks ago. Austin wore a big neckbrace and took it off at one point to show his scar. He looked to be in quite a bit of pain and was nowhere near as articulate as he usually is. Jim Ross tried hard to ask serious questions and make this look like a credible interview, even though they showed footage of Austin's stuntman getting hit by a car immediately before the interview started. They acknowledged for the first time on WWF TV that Austin and Debra were engaged to be married. Austin was asked when he would be back, and he said “three to four months”. It was weird, because he said it like he really meant it, but at the same time he said it in the tone of voice you'd use if you were trying to convince yourself of something. Injuries can heal quickly, but I'm not so sure I believe he'll really be back that soon.
- Ken Shamrock announced at a press conference during the PRIDE 9 show that he had signed a two-match deal with the company for an estimated \$750,000. Shamrock said that he was going to fight one match and then decide whether or not it would be in his best interests to fight another. WWF, who renewed their two-year option on Shamrock's contract last year, gave him his official release and said they'd help promote his fights. DSE, the group behind the PRIDE events, is hoping to get the Shamrock fights on US pay-per-view later this year, although that's far from a done deal. If the fights do manage to get aired in the US, Shamrock would be taking a big risk as his marketability in the WWF is pretty much based solely on the gimmick of him being the World's Most Dangerous Man. Should he fight and lose on US pay-per-view, it might hurt his chances of returning to the WWF next year, which was the plan all along.
- I know this will come as a shock to many, but those were not Mae Young's breasts that you thought you saw on pay-per-view last week. I know, I didn't believe the story when I heard it either, especially when I found out Jim Byrne of the WWF was the one making the claim. Byrne told the AP and the New York Post that the puppies we thought we saw were actually the work of a Hollywood make-up artist who fitted Mae with a chest-shaped prosthesis backstage before the show. Apparently, Vince came up with the idea after watching the movie “Something About

Mary". The other fishy thing was that Byrne's claim came about shortly after Madison Square Garden officials called down fire and brimstone on the WWF for the stunt. Garden officials claimed they knew nothing about the stunt and were going under the assumption that Mae was really topless. They promised an investigation, which I would assume will go absolutely nowhere. Byrne, in the same article in which he claimed the breasts were fake, went on to justify the WWF's nude display by pointing out that a huge "X" had been placed over the breasts and that the show had been rated TV-14 "N" with the "N" standing for "Nudity". I asked for responses on our website and found that the majority of viewers thought the breasts were fake, although some were 100% certain that they were real. The Post and AP articles even had a quote from George Neopolitano, who was shooting photos at ringside, and he said he thought the breasts were real at first and is still not sure what it was he saw. I cannot bring myself to go back and watch the tape, but for what it's worth we have talked to a couple of WWF performers who have confirmed that Mae Young's breasts at the PPV were about as real as the breasts of all the other women in that contest except for Miss Kitty. In other words, they really were fake.

- Undertaker is giving Shane Douglas a run for his money as the Most Fragile Man in Wrestling after suffering a torn pectoral muscle while working out last week. Undertaker had surgery shortly thereafter and is expected out of action an additional four to five months.

- Judging from the way they've been doing the angle with Rock and Show, I assume that Rock's feet were really supposed to touch the floor in the Royal Rumble, but for some reason they didn't. On the other hand, Show did promise video footage on Smackdown, so they might just be dragging this angle out. Show vs. Rock is scheduled to be the main event of this month's PPV, probably with the stipulation being that the winner gets the WWF Title shot at WrestleMania.

- I can't believe they passed up the opportunity to do a hair vs. hair match with Show. There would be no storyline reason for it whatsoever, but at least he'd have an excuse for sporting that very unflattering 'do.

- People Magazine had a short blurb last week about Steve Austin's neck surgery.

- The rumored big announcement from the WWF Cafe is that Vince will be purchasing an NFL team. What horrible news. Now there will be even more ammunition for the guys in wrestling who think the NFL is worked.

- Taka Michinoku will be out about a month with a dislocated shoulder suffered at the Royal Rumble. He didn't really break his cheekbone, although the WWF is claiming that he did since he landed right on his face taking the bump. Taka actually apologized to Vince after he got hurt since he felt bad that he wasn't able to do the rest of the run-ins he was scheduled for.

- There was some talk last week of recreating the WWF Light Heavyweight Division and giving it a serious shot this time around. At one point, the idea of putting Dean Malenko in charge of the

booking was battled around. I'm not sure of the status this week, but Vince sure seemed serious about it the first time around, and it's no secret what ended up happening there.

- Newsweek had a cover story on the WWF this week, entitled "Why America Is Hooked On Pro Wrestling". It was pretty good despite a few factual errors. There were also the expected funny lines, such as Baron Von Rashke claiming Vince McMahon had taken wrestling back "to where we started". For the most part, the WWF is about as far from where wrestling started as it could possibly be, but on the other hand, incidents like what happened in Montreal justify Rashke's claim. The article talked about how wrestlers didn't make a lot of money in the old days, but then Vince told a story about how he got hooked on wrestling when he used to drive around with Jerry Graham "in a 1959 blood red Cadillac convertible, lighting a cigar with a one-hundred dollar bill, not stopping at stoplights". The article claimed that McMahon testified that wrestling was fake so that state athletic commissions would drop PPV taxes, and the revelation that wrestling wasn't real brought about a huge boom in popularity that culminated with 93,000 people showing up at WrestleMania III. The problem with this cute little story, besides the fact that 93,000 people didn't show up at WrestleMania (it was probably about 78,000), is that Vince testified before the New Jersey State Athletic Commission in 1989, which was over two years AFTER WrestleMania III, plus, despite his testimony, New Jersey didn't drop the tax until the 1997 SummerSlam in New Jersey. There were three other sidebar articles. The first was about Newsweek reporter John Leland's four-day training session at Larry Sharpe's Monster Factory. Leland only lasted three days. The funniest line in the entire magazine was this jewel of coaching by Sharpe after Leland took a bump into the turnbuckle: "That was better, Newsweek. It still sucked, but it wasn't ridiculous." There was another article on whether wrestling was bad for kids, the gist of the article being that kids under eight shouldn't be exposed to it because they are too young to differentiate between fantasy and reality. The final sidebar was about Bob Mould's new career as part of WCW. Overall, some good positive publicity for wrestling.

- All that great publicity succeeded in lowering the WWFE stock 3/16 to close at 15 and 1/4.

- I saw all the WWF Super Bowl commercials, and thought they were pretty dumb for the most part. The funniest thing was something that very few people caught. During the beauty contest commercial, the woman who won was named "Miss Congeniality", which was the name Amy Dumas, who should debut on WWF TV at any time, used while in ECW. Congeniality was billed from Connecticut, home of the WWF, and she beat out the contestant from Georgia, home of WCW. That damn evil Vince, master of the subliminal messages.

- Jim Ross in his online report heavily plugged Shawn Michaels' wrestling school down in Texas, although Ross made no mention of Michaels returning to TV anytime soon. Speaking of Shawn, I finally saw the Fake Hayabusa vs. "H" match that he ref'd for FMW last year. Michaels got a pretty big pop from the crowd, although it was actually one of the announcers who marked out the most. It was funny hearing the Japanese commentators saying "HBK" and "Heartbreak Kid". Michaels and Fake Hayabusa argued throughout the match leading to a spot where Fake hit him in the stomach with a folding chair. Michaels responded by KILLING Fake dead with a dope superkick and then giving violent crotch chops over his fallen body and screaming "Suck on

this!" Crowd went hoss for that. Michaels looked pretty skinny and obviously didn't take any bumps, but he was moving around like he was just fine and in no pain whatsoever. Boy, do I ever miss watching Michaels work.

- The Cleveland Plains Dealer had an article about how tons of fans flooded the ticket windows to demand refunds after it was announced that Rock and Chris Jericho weren't going to be there. So many people showed up that the ticket people had to hand out slips of paper and promise that they'd call everyone back with refund information later. The newspaper did not list exactly how many people asked for their money back, but independent sources peg the number at around 2,000.

WWF On Television

WWF Smackdown (January 27 — Taped January 25): Al Snow beat Billy Gunn—DQ when Billy used Blackman's kendo stick on both of them. The stipulations for this match were that Head Cheese would get a Tag Title shot on Raw if Snow won... Hunter and Stephanie decided to try to break up the friendship of Rock and Rikishi by signing them to a match in the main event. Pig Show then walked into the room. He said he had photographic proof that Rock's feet touched the ground during the Rumble. He showed Hunter and Steph some photos that us rubes at home didn't get to see. Hunter said the pictures were kind of fuzzy and that he needed an eyewitness. Show said he'd go find one... They showed a clip of Foley backstage smiling into the camera. Michael Cole then said that they were waiting for Foley to arrive at the building... Cactus Jack came down to the ring and talked about the Rumble match for awhile. He called out Hunter. Stephanie came out instead. She said Hunter had already beaten Jack at his own game, so there was no point in him coming out. Jack said Helmsely and Steph would never produce children because Hunter had no balls. She slapped him hard. Cactus then CHEWED HER OUT and dared her to slap him again. She got scared and backed up the ramp. Cactus said if Hunter wasn't coming out, he was going to pack his bags and go home. Some boos for that. Hunter didn't come out, so Jack went home... Bob Holly tried to convince Crash to get back together with him. Crash said no. Bob said he was going to take out Viscera then... Edge and Christian promised to beat up the Dudleys for Terri. Cole noted that Terri had miraculously broken no bones... Edge & Christian d. Dudleys. After the match, the Dudleys destroyed the good guys. Bubba ended up powerbombing Christian over the top rope through Edge and a table. Edge's mouth got busted up legit on this bump. I never thought I'd say this, but the Dudleys RULE lately... Kane went into Hunter's dressing room and said he wanted X-Pac. Hunter said X-Pac wasn't in the building, but told Kane that he could have him on Raw. Steph then added that Kane had to beat Pig Show first... Viscera d. Bob Holly after seemingly crushing his skull with a fallaway slam. Both Hollys then destroyed Viscera, meaning the cousins are back together after a whole one day apart... Show went into HHH's office for the sole purpose of getting his photos back. I don't know why I found this so funny... Kane NC Show when DX ran in. Of course, X-Pac was among them. DX destroyed Kane forever and then tied him to a ringpost. X-Pac then grabbed Tori and forced Kane to listen to a lewd "X-Pac and Tori Christmas Story". X-Pac must have said some really naughty things because there was a ton of editing here. Tori then walked up to X-Pac and slipped him some nappy tongue. IT WAS A SWERVE

ALL ALONG! Believe it or not, a lot of people actually never saw this one coming... Kane was shown leaving the Arena in a despondent state. He did not utter his trademarked Polar Bear Roar, which was sad... Godfather & D-Lo NC Too Cool when both teams just decided to dance instead of fight. This was the biggest pop in the history of wrestling for a no-contest. Suddenly, Mae Young and Mark Henry came out. Mae announced that she was pregnant. They have GOT to be trying to unload Mark Henry... Posse made fun of Tazz backstage for being too short. Oh my God, Tazz has been killed already. First, they acknowledge his lack of size, then they put him in the ring with the Mean Street Posse. At least Tazz won after choking out Pete Gas. After the match, however, they killed him off further by having Kurt Angle run down and choke him out. Wait until you read what they did to Tazz on the house shows... Edge d. Gangrel in a hardcore match. This was pretty bad... Chris Jericho d. Crash Holly in a very good little match to retain the IC Title. Chyna held up Jericho's hand after the match. This is getting more and more creepy by the week... Rock NC Rikishi Phatu in the main event when Show and DX ran in. They BADLY botched up a Rock Bottom spot and had to try it again. Amazingly, the WWF didn't bother to edit the first screwed-up one off TV. Rikishi sprained his ankle legit and was off TV the next week. DX and Show destroyed both guys after the match. Too Cool tried to make the save but they were punked too. A few good matches and a couple good angles, but overall a bit boring.

Raw is War (January 31 — Live): The New Age Outlaws came down to the ring and cut their promo. Backstage, Al Snow tried to come up with a name for himself and Steve Blackman. Blackman hated all of them. How about Snow Black? Or Blackhead? Anyway, during the Snow & Blackman vs. Acolytes match, Benoit, Malenko, Saturn and Eddy all walked into the arena and sat down in the front row. All four have definitely signed WWF contracts, because they're already showing up late to TV Tapings. The fans were stunned. Road Dogg ended up taking a bump at their feet, and after exchanging words he punched Benoit. Why in the hell would anyone in their right mind ever do that? Benoit and the other three totally kicked Dogg's ass. All four hit the ring and destroyed the Outlaws. Eddy hit a frog splash on Billy after Saturn hit him with an exploder. Billy can put that in his Baby Book that he took his first real suplex on January 31, 2000. Benoit then hit Road Dogg with a diving headbutt after Malenko suplexed him. Crowd went totally HIZZOSS for all of this. The four, whom Ross called the "Radicals", headed up the ramp afterwards... Backstage, Foley revealed that he had invited the four to Raw, and said they were going to go have some fun... Kurt Angle came out and mocked Rock's catch-phrase. Angle said he was going to beat up Rock later, and reminded fans that he'd already beaten him once already. Some really good heat for Angle... Backstage, Hunter told DX that they would have to deal with the Radicals on their own. Giant suddenly walked in with an absurd new haircut. There really wasn't anything wrong with the haircut, but every single person in the whole world that called us thought Giant looked like a total goof with it. Show said he had the witness that he promised on Smackdown, and introduced Jim Dotsan. Dotsan said yes, Rock's feet had touched the floor first at the Rumble. Hunter said he needed video proof, and Wide said he'd bring it to Thunder. OK, if Show had video proof all along, WHY WAS HE WASTING HIS TIME WITH BAD PHOTOS AND GOOFY WITNESSES?... Christian d. D-Von Dudley—DQ when Edge helped out. Dudleys attacked Edge and Christian after the match but the Hardy's made the save. Jeff hit a HUGE senton bomb off the top rope to the floor through Bubba and a table. More

great carnage from these six guys... Radicals were shown chatting with the babyfaces backstage. The Mean Street Posse came up and warned the Radicals not to mess with them. Obviously, the Posse has never watched Nitro. The Radicals destroyed them. Benoit absolutely PUMMELED Pete Gas in Raw's Greatest Moment Ever... Show squashed Too Cool in a handicap match. So much for their push. Rock then appeared on the TitanTron and made fun of Show's new hairdo. "Go back to Supercuts and get your five dollars back, jabronie!" Rock screamed. Rock was much funnier this evening than he's been lately... Rock faced Kurt Angle. Angle tried to leave at one point but Tazz tossed him back into the ring. Rock then hit the uranage and the People's Elbow. One, two, THREE. Kurt Angle got pinned in his own damn hometown. Someone must have mistaken him for Ric Flair. After the match, Tazz accidentally clotheslined Rock and then chased after Tazz. Tazz must never give chase to anyone ever again... Backstage, the Posse paid off the Acolytes to protect them... Chyna came out with a pyro bazooka. Insert numerous jokes here. X-Pac d. Chris Jericho in a non-title match. Lots of good stuff. Tori hit Jericho with the IC Title leading to the finish... Dudleys went up to the Acolytes backstage and said they wanted protection as well. Acolytes said OK, then decided to go into the protection business. Dudleys said they'd write a check and Faarooq said it had better not bounce... Speaking of bounce, all the women came out to be "lumberjills" for Miss Kitty's Snow Bunny Title Defense. That sounds like a Christmas program. There was a little swimming pool filled with snow that Kitty was going to wrestle in. Kitty wore the cutest little bunny outfit. My heart flutters when I see Kitty, who is blonde again. Kitty's opponent was "Harvina", who ended up being Harvey Whippleman in disguise. Harvey won after Jackie hit Kitty. So yes, Harvey Whippleman is the new WWF Women's Champion. This was atrocious... Backstage, Cactus took the Radicals to Hunter's office to get contracts. Hunter told them that this was his show. Benoit said all they wanted was an opportunity. Hunter said he'd think about it... Hollys d. Viscera in a handicap match. This was one of the worst matches I have ever seen and it seemed like it went on for five or six hours. It was actually five minutes. I have decided that if a doctor ever tells me I have six months left to live, I will just watch this match repeatedly. My GOD was it ever horrible... Bubba Ray d. Matt Hardy—DQ when Matt used a chair. I was still recovering from the Viscera match so I can't tell you much about this. Afterwards, Acolytes ran out to protect the Dudleys. Acolytes put Matt on a double stacked table and then threw the steps into the ring. Bubba stood on top of them and then powerbombed Jeff through Matt and both tables. More fun carnage... Backstage, Hunter told the Radicals that they were not ready for the WWF. He kicked them out of the Arena. Cactus told Hunter that he'd made a big mistake... Hunter came out for his match against Kane. No Kane. Hunter grabbed the mic and ran down Kane like crazy. Ross noted that it was not like Kane to be tardy. Hunter said if Kane didn't come out, he was going to go back and get him. Cactus ended up coming out instead. He said he was pissed that Hunter had thrown his guests out of the building. Cactus ran down to the ring and they brawled. Hunter tried to run away but the Radicals attacked him and stomped a mudhole in his ass. I actually giggled like a little girl when I saw Benoit chop the living shit out of Hunter. Show went off the air with the Radicals celebrating with Cactus. A good show overall.

WWF On Tour

Dayton, OH (January 29): Godfather & D-Lo Brown d. Headbangers, Christian d. Billy Gunn in what I would have to say is a pretty surprising finish, Val Venis d. Al Snow, Kurt Angle d. Tazz, Hunter Hearst Helmsely d. Test, Steve Blackman d. Gangrel, Dudleys d. Hardy, Scotty Too Hotty d. Crash Holly, Kane & Bradshaw d. Pig Show & X-Pac in the main event.

Cleveland, OH (January 30 — Matinee Show): This was billed as a pre-Superbowl party. Fans were festive until they were told that Rock, Chris Jericho, Rikishi Phatu, Big Bossman, Luna Vachon and Road Dogg all weren't going to be there for one reason or another. Apparently, fans thought that if they chanted "ROCKY!" repeatedly throughout the show that Rock would magically show up in the building. Didn't happen. Because Rock was gone, they had a battle royal with the winner getting a shot at HHH and the WWF Title later. Kane won to a pretty big pop. Kane ended up beating Hunter via DQ when Paul Wight and DX all ran in. Kane fought back, hit Hunter with two tombstones, and left. After the match, Hunter got on the mic and told fans not to worry, because he was OK and still the WWF Champion. I feel better now. Other results saw Too Cool NC Godfather & D-Lo and Headbangers in a three-way. Headbangers were eliminated first and then Too Cool and the Pimps decided to dance instead of fight. Christopher's pants fell down while he was dancing and Too Cool ran away embarrassed. Jerry Lawler d. Gangrel, Kurt Angle pinned Tazz. Sucks to be Tazz. After the match, Tazz tried to apply a katahajime but Angle fought free with kicks. Things are not looking good for Tazz at this point. Val Venis d. Prince Albert, Test & Bradshaw d. Billy Gunn & Pig Show, Kane d. X-Pac, Dudleys d. Hardy.

WCW News and Notes

- WCW announced on Nitro that Hulk Hogan would appear on the Thursday Thunder show to address comments made by Lex Luger. At this point, it appears everything that has been said about the soured relationship between Hogan and WCW is a complete work. The plan still seems to be for a Hogan vs. Luger match at the PPV. Over the weekend, rumors had been going around backstage that WCW was still going to book Hogan on pay-per-views, because he still had several more left on his contract, but not book him on TV because he commanded something like \$25,000 per appearance. Of course, this would be a total bonehead move because Hogan's PPV cut is 25%, which means that they'd be sacrificing more money by saving that \$25,000 appearance fee than they would using him on TV to try to pop a bigger buyrate. There have been a lot of really weird rumors circulating backstage for about three weeks now.

- The latest on the turmoil backstage in WCW is that Terry Taylor is politicking for a new booking committee with himself at the head and Vince Russo, Ed Ferrara and Bill Banks helping with the writing. JJ Dillon, Kevin Sullivan and Gary Juster would have no part of this new committee. This would certainly be a more family-friendly committee with most of the guys backstage, and I still have yet to figure out why they didn't offer Terry Taylor the job in the first place after Russo was demoted. Taylor once noted that when he was fired from WCW a few years back, Nitro's 83-week winning streak ended and they never beat Raw again. Of course, that's just a coincidence since Raw had been building an audience for several months prior to that point. But

it is no coincidence that as soon as Taylor left, so did a lot of the logic in the WCW storylines. Taylor has a good mind for wrestling and would have been the perfect editor for Russo in WCW. Conspiracy theorists would claim this is the exact reason Taylor wasn't given Russo's position originally — because someone is trying to destroy WCW from within. But that's just a wild fantasy, right?

- Get a load of this. House show main events this week were Kevin Nash vs. Ric Flair. Nash came out before the match and said that, as Commissioner, he had some rulings to make. He said the Figure Four would be banned during his match with Flair. I guess he didn't like all the jokes I've been making about him in the newsletter. During the match, the referee took a bump — well, duh — and Flair got the pin. When the referee didn't wake up, Flair decided to apply the banned Figure Four. The referee then came to, saw Flair using the banned hold, and disqualified him. NUCLEAR heat for that, and it wasn't the "I can't wait for WCW to come back so Flair can get his revenge on Kevin Nash" heat, it was "I will absolutely never ever come to a WCW show again as long as I live" heat. If I wasn't so straight-laced, I'd think someone was trying to totally kill off house show business and destroy the company from within in the process.

- Speaking of Kevin Nash, he "broke his ankle" this weekend and will be unable to wrestle for awhile. I know this sounds too incredible to be true. There is definitely someone with psychic abilities in WCW, perhaps Kreskin. Remember the story about the person who predicted Nash would suffer a concussion at Nitro, and amazingly Nash did, after being hit with a rubber crowbar? Well, someone predicted last week that Nash was probably going to get "injured" again because he hated working house shows so much. Amazingly, Nash stepped out of his rental car Sunday, slipped on some ice, and broke his ankle. I have a fantastic idea. Put this psychic person to work on the WWF. This person could foresee WWF angles a week in advance, and then WCW could put them on TV and their ratings would go up. Some of you may think I'm kidding, but it's a better idea than anything WCW has come up with in the last several months. Anyway, Nash went to see Dr. James Andrews on Monday and the rumor in the locker room was that he'd undergone surgery, although we can't confirm that. It's especially suspect since many of his closest friends in the company also thought there was a good chance Nash was working everyone just so he wouldn't have to go on the upcoming tour of Germany, which he was complaining about all last week. Nash is expected out of action for the rest of his life, although he may be back in the ring in about six weeks.

- Still no word on the status of Konnan and Shane Douglas. The chances of either guy going to the WWF are down to about zero at press time. Douglas has expressed interest in talking to Busch about being brought back into the company's good graces. The feeling in the locker room seems to be that Douglas will be brought back long before Konnan will. On the other hand, Konnan has been used as a scapegoat so many times in the past that nobody really buys that he'll be off TV for any real length of time. Konnan also signed his original deal under the Eric Bischoff regime, which means there is no 90-day review clause where WCW could release him. In other words, whether he's on TV or not, he'll be making his estimated \$11,500 per week until his deal expires, which is believed to be December of this year.

- There was talk over the weekend of doing a lumberjack match on Nitro with Sid facing Nash for the WCW Title. I believe there were only going to be four lumberjacks, two of which would be Creative Control and the other two of which would be Bagwell and Page. DDP and Buff would fight to the back leaving Sid alone with Nash and the Harris Twins. Somehow, Sid would end up retaining the belt at the end. Obviously, those plans had to be scrapped after Nash broke his ankle.

- I don't know why I found this story so funny, but there are sexual morality clauses written into the WCW contracts.

- Speaking of sexual morality, porn star Jasmin St. Claire is not currently negotiating with WCW, although she did send them a videotape of her work in XPW.

- Mark Madden was called Monday afternoon to fill in for Bobby Heenan, who had a bad case of strep throat. Management was said to be pleased with how he did, so I guess we may be seeing him a bit more regularly from now on.

- Buff Bagwell missed TV this past week after his neck started acting up again. He's expected back by the time most of you read this.

- WCW was very impressed with Chris Daniels, who received a try-out match with Mike Henderson prior to the Thunder tapings this past Tuesday night. I saw these two work a match at a Tom Reeder 1-800 Collect show up here in Seattle a few years back, and it ranks as probably the second best match I've ever seen live. WCW was talking last week as if they were going to offer Daniels a deal. No word at press time on Henderson.

- Remember the story last week about how WCW's quarter hour jumped from a 2.7 to a 3.9 when Bagwell and Page had their main event on Nitro? Well, WCW decided the best thing to do with the only feud that has meant a thing in the ratings recently was to kill it off as quickly as possible. Page was called last Thursday and told that he would have one more brawl with Buff Bagwell on the January 31st Nitro, and then the following night on Thunder they'd end up best friends and tag team partners. On Monday prior to Nitro, Page presented Ferrara and Banks with a new storyline that would carry their feud over until at least the first Nitro after SuperBrawl. Page's plan ended up being OK'd, which means if nothing changes the feud will continue for at least a couple more weeks.

- Bert Prentice signed a deal with WCW on Thursday to become one of their new developmental territories. WCW will begin sending talent on February 11th. WWF had sent Prentice paperwork as well, but he opted to go with WCW. WCW DESPERATELY needs to start up some developmental territories to send their younger guys and Power Plant trainees to. Throwing the guys on WCW Saturday Night before they're ready for TV, even though nobody actually watches that show, is not the right way to get them experience.

- David Flair recently moved to Atlanta so he could spend more time at the Power Plant. Insider sources tell us that if Flair had not agreed to move, WCW was willing to move the entire Power Plant facility up to his neighborhood to ensure that he attended classes.
- Bill Busch is said to be absolutely clueless about the wrestling industry, contrary to rumors that were going around when he was first promoted to Vice President.
- The gist of Bret Hart's column this week was that he's totally bored sitting at home doing nothing, but is not going to risk going back anytime soon because he feels that recurring concussions are the real reason boxers like Muhammed Ali developed brain damage and Parkinson's disease later in life. Bret seemed happier than usual just sitting home and drawing.
- Perry Saturn had an interesting interview on the LAW radio show last week. He said that Kevin Sullivan once told himself, Benoit and Malenko that they had never drawn a dime for anyone in this business and never would, and that they were costing WCW too much money. Write that one down, kids. Saturn also claimed that Sullivan nixed the plan to put Torrie with the Revolution at the PPV. Saturn uttered the immortal line "Shane screwed Shane", which was funny because that was the EXACT line I had used when joking with someone the day before about how far up the creek Douglas currently was. Saturn said that Shane had wanted to think things over whereas the other four just wanted to get the hell out of WCW, which is what led to their eventual split. Saturn said Douglas left a "vulgar" message on his answering machine claiming that Benoit and the group "screwed" him. Saturn said he was no longer talking to Douglas.
- Dallas Page has been talking with Barnes & Noble and Borders Bookstores about getting "Positively Page" on shelves as early as this March.

WCW On Television

Thursday Thunder (January 26 — Taped January 25): This show opened with a video package detailing Sid's troubles in WCW lately and his victory over Kevin Nash for the WCW Title... Gene Okerlund came out to interview Sid, and actually called the WCW Title the "crown jewel of sports". Tenay asked viewers if they had recovered yet from Sid's title win. I may never recover. Sid came down and cut one of the most incomprehensible promos of his career — which is really saying something — the gist of which was that he was the Champion. Nash and the NWO came out. Nash showed the footage from Nitro of Sid getting counted out of the ring during a commercial break for pinning "the wrong Harris Twin". Nash said that Sid didn't get past the twins, and thus should not have gotten an opportunity to face Nash for the belt. Nash decided to add that Sid had also used the banned powerbomb on the twins as well. Too bad that move hadn't been banned until after Sid had wrestled the twins. Anyway, Nash proclaimed himself new WCW Champion. Sid relinquished the belt to a frightened Dave Penzer. Nash then signed himself vs. Sid and the Harris Twin That Sid Didn't Beat in a cage match for the main event of Thunder with the World Title on the line. The stipulations were that the powerbomb was banned and Sid had to pin Nash to win the belt back. Talk about killing off whatever credibility that belt

had left... Gene interviewed Maestro. Maestro's gimmick should be that he's hopelessly out-of-date and stuck in the '80s. Maestro claimed his performances would sell out for "many millennium"... NWO started gambling backstage, since they had nothing better to do... If the NWO never has to wrestle, why do they always go to the TV tapings?... Maestro d. Norman Smiley. Smiley came down to the ring with some Showgirls. For some reason, this enraged Maestro. Norman and the Showgirls ALL did the Lewd Dance, which was pretty funny. Maestro attacked Norman in the ring, which was twice as funny because the girls just kept right on dancing. Maestro and Norman brawled backstage. Suddenly, Norman looked up and saw the Demon — who has returned — and was so scared that he fainted and was pinned. I am absolutely not making this finish up. Demon was so scary and so vicious that he went on to lose to Terry Funk shortly thereafter to a Kiwi Roll. I swear I'm not making any of this show up. This match was HIDEOUS, and the announcers were playing it up like this was a huge win for Funk... The Artist Formerly Known as Prince Laukea d. Kid Romeo in a Jobber Title Tournament match... Wayne Newton showed up at the NWO casino... Vampiro d. Kidman with a top rope Michinoku Driver. This was really weird. Kidman got almost no offense in whatsoever and was just squashed dead. So much for his big push. This match was a million times better than the one they had on Nitro... The cops showed up at the NWO Casino and said they wanted to investigate some illegal gambling. Nash told them to hold on for a moment. He disappeared and returned with Wayne Newton, whom the cops arrested. And no, the cops never did investigate the illegal gambling, they just took Wayne to the pokey... Buff Bagwell d. Lex Luger—DQ when Liz hit Buff with a bat. Luger took the Nonsensical Bump of the Week off an elbow in the corner... Three-Count came out and danced. Vito, Johnny and Disco interrupted them. It turned into a tag match which the Mamalukes won. Not bad and everyone worked hard. After the match, Mamalukes sang "New York, New York". David, Daphne and Crowbar then ran in and attacked them. Since Three-Count's green dots were still on the canvas, David, Daphne and Crowbar decided to do a dance number for the fans. Man, was this ever the weirdest thing... Arn and Terry Funk went looking for someone backstage... Booker T d. Jerry Flynn with a sidewalk slam. Not much of note here... Shat came down to the ring and made fun of the fans. Then he danced. Shat then walked away and they went to commercial. To think they flew Miller in just for that... Gene interviewed Kimberly. She said she was still friends with "Marcus" and that he and Page got along just fine. In carny that means: "Page and Marcus hate each other and will fight soon"... Finley told Knobs to stay backstage during his hardcore match with Bam Bam Bigelow. Finley put a wrench in his back pocket. Knobs said he wanted a hug. Finley obliged, and Knobs grabbed his ass. Actually, what really happened was Knobs pickpocketed the wrench out of Finley's trousers and Fit didn't seem to notice this. During his match, Finley went to grab the wrench but couldn't find it. Bigelow then killed him with an Asbury Park Driver for the pin. Fit got up and noticed Knobs cackling on the TurnerTron. Of course, there is absolutely no logical reason why Knobs would turn on Finley, which means this angle must continue... Sid d. Kevin Nash & The Mysterious Harris in a cage match. Just terrible. Sid made Nash submit to the Crippler Crossface for the finish. This was the second worst submission move I've ever seen, behind only the Figure Four Hulk Hogan once tried to apply to Arn Anderson on Nitro. For some reason they proclaimed Sid a two-time WCW Champion, even though in the storyline he hadn't won the Title from Nash the first time, which would mean he is only a one-time Champion. To make matters even more confusing, Chris Benoit is no longer recognized by WCW as a former

Champion on their website. I feel so damn sorry for all of you people trying to keep title histories. What a comedy show this turned out to be.

WCW Monday Nitro (January 31 — Live): Show opened with a highlight reel of Sid winning the title on Thunder. There were no highlights... NWO was shown on the phone. It was funny, because they never actually acknowledged what happened to Nash or why he wasn't at the show. Hall did say into the phone: "I told you to be careful!", but only people who knew he broke his ankle would have had the slightest clue what Hall was talking about. Another example of WCW booking for the Internet. Anyway, Jarrett said Nash had named him Deputy Commissioner and that he was going to run the show while Kevin was gone... Mark Madden replaced Bobby Heenan on commentary... Jarrett came down to the ring with the NWO and some more fitness women. Jarrett signed himself vs. Sid for the WCW Title at SuperBrawl. He also signed himself and the Harris Twins vs. Sid and two mystery partners for the Nitro main event. I guess the Harris Twins are part of the NWO now. So much for having no jobbers in the group... Terry Funk went looking for Ric Flair backstage. Arn sort of blew Funk off... Lash Laroux d. Evan Karagias in a Jobberweight Title Tournament match. Lash's new finisher is the "Whiplash 2000", which is set up like a Stunner but turned into a side-Russian legsweep. I guess that would be a front-Russian legsweep... NWO did some stuff backstage... Gene interviewed David Flair and Crowbar in the back. Mamalukes attacked them and Gene ran for his life. Their match started immediately. Mamalukes ended up winning after Vito put Crowbar through a table. This was an ECW-style brawl and not particularly good... Knobs offered Jarrett some money to book Fit Finley vs. Lex Luger. Jarrett promised that Luger and Finley would be in the same ring later. It has still never been revealed why Knobs hates Finley all of a sudden... Booker headed down to the ring for his match with Big T. Suddenly, his music just stopped. I thought for sure this was a production error. Turned out to be part of an angle. J. Biggs came out with Stevie and Big T and said that Booker had been illegally using the New Harlem Heat's music. Biggs said the music was copyrighted and Booker could never use it again. Biggs said that the flames on Booker's tights were copyrighted too, so he'd have to get new gear. I wonder if this applies to Bam Bam Bigelow as well? Biggs then said — and I am absolutely not making this up — that the letter "T" had been copyrighted by the New Harlem Heat as well, so Booker could no longer use it as part of his own name, which in real-life is "Booker T. Huffman". This was the most absurd thing I have ever heard on a Nitro show, and that's taking into account over 250 shows. So if you are reading this, and your middle name is "T", you are breaking the law because that letter is copyrighted by the New Harlem Heat. There are also some Sesame Street episodes that can never air again. And someone better call Mr. T. Biggs sent Stevie and Big T to the back. Midnight then came out and tossed Biggs into the ring. Booker beat him up. New Harlem Heat then ran out and punked Booker. There was some good heat for much of this segment. Fans also chanted "BOOKER T", collectively uttering the banned letter "T", so expect a class-action lawsuit to be filed by the New Harlem Heat soon... Three-Count attacked Norman backstage... Jarrett told Finley that he was going to referee Knobs vs. Luger... Norman locked himself in Demon's casket to hide from Three-Count... Kidman d. Wall. Vampiro helped. Kidman went to confront Vamp after the match but WCW quickly cut away... Gene interviewed Ric Flair. Flair got a great reaction. Flair tried his absolute damndest to get booed, but the fans just kept cheering him louder and louder. Flair called himself the greatest of all time and even went as far as to

proclaim himself God. Fans cheered more. The problem with Flair is that, at 50, nobody wants to boo him anymore. Plus, most fans actually believe he really is the greatest of all time, so that psychology is not going to work for him anymore if he wants to turn heel. Flair called out Funk, who was supposed to be the babyface but got booed wildly. Funk called Flair a “banana-nosed bastard”. Flair called Funk a “chicken farmer”, to which Funk angrily replied: “Chicken farmer my ass!” Believe me, this was a million times better on TV than it sounds on paper. They finally got into a fight and security broke it up. This was the greatest Nitro moment in months and months... Jarrett decided to have Flair and Funk be Sid’s mystery partners since they hated each other... Lenny and Lodi said that they were sick of their stupid gimmicks and gave their Standards and Practices costumes to Miss Hancock, who is part of their gimmick. Someone please explain that one to me... Luger NC Knobs. Finley and Liz both attacked Knobs. Absolutely horrendous... Norman came out of Demon’s coffin wearing his PISS Warrior outfit... After commercial, Demon was shown backstage telling the police that someone had jacked his outfit. Demon sounded like the biggest pussy in the world here, which I’m pretty sure was the point... Norman d. Shane Helms in an OK match. Afterwards, the cops ran out to arrest Norman, but he resisted arrest and ran away. No shots were fired. The cops seemed content to just let that pussy Demon run after him... Page and Kimberly were shown backstage. The Mamalukes walked by. Vito pinched Kimberly’s ass, but blamed it on Disco. Page attacked Disco leading to their match. Page won clean with the Diamond Cutter. During the match, Tony said that Kimberly had been “goosed”, which may be the first maneuver that Tony has ever successfully identified... Jarrett & Harris Twins beat Sid & Terry Funk & Ric Flair. Flair never came out until the very end, at which point he attacked Funk. Finish saw Jarrett pin Sid after hitting him with a guitar. Match was pretty bad, but it was a decent set-up for their PPV match. The Flair vs. Funk stuff saved this show.

WCW On Tour

Nashville, TN (January 28): Disco Inferno d. Maestro, Wall d. Dustin Rhodes & Berlyn in a three-way, Kidman d. Vampiro. This was billed as a number-one contender’s match for the US Title with the winner getting a title shot “later”. “Later” ended up not being on this show. Meng pinned Lex Luger, Mamalukes d. David Flair & Crowbar & Harris Twins in a three-way, Kevin Nash d. Ric Flair—DQ. Main event was said to be simply horrible. Flair got what was described as a decent reaction at best. The Arena was said to look virtually empty with the floor seats barely filled to capacity.

Johnson City, TN (January 29): Disco Inferno d. Maestro, Wall d. Berlyn & Dustin Rhodes, Kidman d. Vampiro in a number-one contender’s match for the US Title, Knobs d. Crowbar, Meng pinned Lex Luger, Mamalukes d. Harris Twins & David Flair & Crowbar in a three-way, Kevin Nash d. Ric Flair—DQ.

ECW News and Notes

- Rob Van Dam broke his fibula (a bone) doing a baseball slide dropkick during his match with Rhino in Orlando, FL. Van Dam, despite being in quite a bit of pain, managed to finish the match, although fans in attendance knew something was wrong. He was put in a hard cast over the weekend and probably won’t be able to wrestle again for at least six weeks. Because of the

injury, Heyman has pulled him off the Living Dangerously pay-per-view, which will air from Danbury, CT on March 11.

- Lance Storm had to have his head stapled together after taking a hard chairshot in Orlando.
- ECW will be bringing in Gedo and Jado to challenge for the ECW Tag Team Titles at the March 4th show.

ECW On Television

ECW on TNN (January 28 — Taped): Show opened with clips of Raven bitching to Francine backstage. Tommy walked in and got into an argument with Raven, who refused to go to the ring for their match because he was depressed. Francine finally talked Tommy into leaving Raven alone... Cyrus, in studio, cut the tape off during Joel Gertner's opening spiel. Cyrus said there were five guys in ECW who were about to ask for their releases if Gertner got to keep his announcing job. Funny. Cyrus demanded the production guy play something different... They aired clips of the segment on last week's show where Awesome and Sabu jumped Rob Van Dam. Enjoy this build-up, kids, because the chase is always more fun than the capture... Awesome cut a promo with Jeff Jones backstage. He said he was going to beat up Spike Dudley. Awesome said the word "ass" in this interview about the same number of times as Godfather says the word "man" in his. When Awesome cuts a promo he reminds me of a cross between Sid and Don Lapre... Speaking of Don Lapre, when I was younger I actually bought his Making Money package. I am proud to report that I made no money whatsoever with it. But I did learn that the only way to make money quick is to sell the secret of making money quick to poor people... Yoshihiro Tajiri d. Little Guido in a pretty good match with a brainbuster. There were about three commercial breaks in this match alone. Guido kept teasing his armbar submission, but this isn't Japan so almost nobody in the crowd took it seriously... Rob Van Dam cut a promo backstage that I thought had to be at least two hours long, until I realized that it had not been interrupted by any commercial breaks. I still can't figure out if Rob's promos are supposed to be funny... Rhino & Steve Corino d. Tommy Dreamer & Josh Wilcox. Wilcox did almost literally nothing until the very end when he turned on Dreamer and hit him with a chair. Rhino then gave Tommy a piledriver and Corino got the pinfall. After the match, Wilcox told the fans that they sucked and Corino ran down Dusty Rhodes. Of course, Dusty boompalooped down to the ring and cleaned house. He hit Wilcox with an elbow smash and Wilcox did the trademarked Sid Vicious Fall Like An Oak Only More Stiff Bump. Dusty then killed him with a polka-dot elbow. Dusty may be bigger and older than ever, but he can still drop a DOPE elbow... Mike Awesome d. Spike Dudley in another good match. Spike didn't go through a thousand tables this time, but he did take a severe beating nonetheless. They had a weird editing moment near the finish. Awesome hit a Generic Splash off the top and the referee counted two. Suddenly, there was a very obvious cut and the next thing you know, Joey Styles is telling us that Spike kicked out. I guess he must not have kicked out the first time. Anyway, Awesome then leaned a table vertically in the corner and powerbombed Spike through it for the pin. That poor Spike is not long for this world in terms of walking in an upright position. After the match, Awesome powerbombed the referee and then called out Rob Van Dam. RVD came out, but Sabu jumped

him. Everyone brawled as the show went off the air. Pretty good show, although not as good as some previous efforts.

ECW On Tour

St. Petersburg, FL (January 27): This show opened with a ten-bell salute for Bobby Duncum Jr. Mike Whipwreck d. CW Anderson, Kid Cash & Nova & Chris Chetti d. Simon Diamond & Dupps in a six-man, Bubba the Love Sponge d. Bill Alfonso. That Bubba sure gets around, wrestling for WWF, WCW and ECW whenever the shows are in town. Balls Mahoney & New Jack d. Angle & Vic Grimes, Tommy Dreamer d. Lance Storm, Sabu d. Spike Dudley, Mike Awesome d. Masato Tanaka.

Ft. Lauderdale, FL (January 28 — TNN Tapings): This show opened with a ten-bell salute for Duncum Jr. as well. Nova & Chris Chetti & Kid Cash d. Simon Diamond & New Dangerous Alliance, Danny Doring & Roadkill d. Dupp Brothers, Little Guido d. Super Crazy & Yoshihiro Tajiri in a three-way. During the TNN opening, Rob Van Dam and Mike Awesome got into another big pull-apart brawl. Jeff Jones justified his paycheck for once by eating a Van Daminator. Raven d. Eric Watts, Vic Grimes & Angel d. Balls Mahoney & New Jack, Mike Awesome d. Masato Tanaka, Dusty Rhodes & Tommy Dreamer d. Steve Corino & Rhino when Dusty pinned Corino with a phat elbow, Rob Van Dam d. Mikey Whipwreck to retain the ECW TV Title.

Orlando, FL (January 29): Super Crazy & Prodigy d. Dupps, Masato Tanaka d. Simon Diamond, Nova & Chris Chetti & Kid Cash d. Danny Doring & Roadkill & Mikey Whipwreck, Tommy Dreamer d. Yoshihiro Tajiri, Mike Awesome KILLED Little Guido, Sabu d. CW Anderson, Balls Mahoney & New Jack d. Baldies. Highlight of this match was New Jack diving off a pier right next to a "No Diving Off Pier" sign. What a lawbreaker. Rob Van Dam d. Rhino and broke his ankle in the process. This show took place at the Zuma Beach Club and was said to be a damn fun show.

Etcetera

- Make sure you check out the "Off the Top Rope" radio show if you live in the Chicago area, hosted by our good buddy Brian Schenk. It currently airs from 7:00 to 8:30 AM on WEEF AM 1430 every Saturday morning. Brian is also selling tapes of his show, and you can receive a sample copy for \$2 to PO Box 6082, Lindenhurst, IL 60046. For more information, you can e.mail Brian at his new e.mail address: offthetoprope@mailcity.com.

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